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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2018  
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SUBJECT: ANNOUNCEMENT OF 600 MORE PISGAT ZEEV UNITS

REF: 07 JERUSALEM 303

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On March 31, the Local Committee for Planning and Building of the Jerusalem municipality convened and approved a plan for 600 new units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Zeev. The approval is the first step in a lengthy process before construction begins. Contacts in the Jerusalem mayor's office told PolOff that the plan was tabled by the Israel Land Administration (ILA) after lengthy consideration. Actual construction is not imminent, but the announcement will fuel Palestinian perceptions that the GOI is not serious about implementation of Israeli Roadmap obligations on settlements. END SUMMARY

12. (C) According to a Jerusalem Municipality press release, the Local Committee for Planning and Building (a subcommittee of the Jerusalem City Council) met and approved a plan for 600 residential units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Zeev on March 31. Per reftel, the plan will move to a regional planning board and, if approved, will be submitted for a sixty day period of public review, after which the Israel Land Administration (ILA) or the Ministry of Construction and Housing (MOCH) can issue public tenders for construction. Based on previous cases, it could be months or years before actual construction begins.

13. (C) Jerusalem municipality official Elad Halevy reiterated to PolOff that "you know our stance on Jerusalem - we consider building within the municipal limits to be legitimate regardless of whether it is East or West." According to the press release, the 600 units are intended "to promote affordable apartments for young couples," as announced by Mayor Lupolianski in January and "following the Prime Minister's declaration that the construction in Jerusalem's neighborhoods will continue, the government won't impose any delays on this plan."

14. (C) Jerusalem lawyer Danny Seidemann said consideration of the plan was going on "for years," and bringing it forward yesterday (March 31) was no coincidence," referring to the Secretary's presence in Jerusalem when the committee

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convened. The Jerusalem municipality schedules the subcommittee meetings and sets the agenda, but Sharvit told PolOff that any interested party can present a land plan for consideration, and in this case, it was the ILA.

15. (C) COMMENT: The 600 units at Pisgat Zeev were under consideration for up to a year by the local planning committee. Their appearance on the agenda and subsequent approval during the Secretary's visit is likely a deliberate and shrewd move by the municipality - and outside of the control of PM Olmert. Timing aside, this is yet another data

point in a now long string of post-Annapolis announcements on Israeli settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Although the Pisgat Zeev plan is at an early stage, the announcement will further disillusion Palestinians and harm the environment for negotiations. END COMMENT.  
WALLES